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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [OSCE](#)
SUBJECT: OPEN SKIES TREATY: APRIL 14 PLENARY - U.S.
CHAIRMANSHIP TAKES OFF

REF: STATE 6161

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On April 14, the U.S. began its Chairmanship of the Open Skies Consultative Commission (OSCC) calling upon States to complete work on the digital video sensor decision. The U.S. also kicked off discussion on potential commemoration activities for the 500th observation flight expected to occur this summer. Romania announced it is prepared to certify its aircraft during week 38 (15-21 September). Turkey, the U.S. and several others spoke against a recent Russian notification seeking no mission activity in the last week of April due to lack of hotel space. Russia subsequently agreed to allow Turkey to come a week later, thus hosting two missions simultaneously as a result. Latvia protested Russian delays in issuing visas for its team members that prevented them from participating in a planned joint mission by Latvia and Germany during the week of March 31. The UK informed delegations informally that it will no longer be able to conduct active missions due to budget cuts (see SEPTTEL report). The IWGRP met after the plenary to discuss new Russian food for thought and decision papers concerning procedures for alternate airfields. The next plenary and IWGRP will be on May 5. End Summary.

U.S. OSCC Chair Commences

¶2. (SBU) On April 14, U.S. Chief Arms Control Delegate Hugh Neighbour opened the 46th session of the Open Skies Consultative Commission with a statement recalling the 16th anniversary since Treaty signature in March 1992. He also called on States to complete work on the digital video sensor decision (Revision One to Decision 14) in the next few months. His statement reminded States of the upcoming 500th observation flight, and a U.S. food for thought paper prepared for discussions on ways the OSCC can commemorate the occasion. (OSCC46.JOUR/142, Annex 1).

¶3. (SBU) Romainia (Neculaescu) announced that with Germanys generous support, it is planning to certify its AN-30 aircraft from September 15-21. The aircraft is equipped with optical framing cameras (Leica Wild RC20). (OSCC.DEL/5/08)

Russian holiday week

14. (SBU) Turkey (Begec) read a statement objecting to Russia's recent notification requesting states refrain from conducting a mission from April 26-May 3 due to lack of hotel space. He noted that the request is not compatible with the letter or spirit of the Treaty. Turkey respects the practice of observing host country holidays to the extent possible and 2008 was no exception. Practical solutions have been found in the past to address these situations and Turkey is prepared to work on a bilateral solution.

15. (SBU) The U.S. (Silberberg), also on behalf of Canada, the Czech Republic, Germany, Latvia, and Poland, made a similar statement objecting to the Russian request to refrain from conducting an observation flight during this week. This statement expressed concern about setting an unhelpful precedent for the future, especially when the Treaty does not recognize lack of hotel space as a legitimate reason to avoid conducting a flight (OSCC.DEL/4/08). Finland, the UK, and Sweden also expressed similar reservations in separate national statements and urged the parties involved to find a bilateral solution.

16. (SBU) Russia (Kozlov) acknowledged the concerns about blocking off that particular week. He said the unusual late timing of Orthodox Easter this year and it coinciding with the labor holidays result in a combined popular holiday week. Russia does not anticipate this happening on a regular basis. Russia is also willing to work with Turkey to find a bilateral solution.

17. (SBU) Comment: Turkey had been scheduled to use this timeslot according to the second quarter deconfliction process. Turkey informed us that Russia offered to host them the following week, which means it would be hosting two missions simultaneously. Under the Treaty, a state is not obligated to host more than one mission at a time, but it appears Russia is willing to make an exception in order to accommodate this situation, something within their prerogative. USDel believes it was important to raise the issue at the plenary, and we thank Washington for the quick response to the proposed statement. We believe this situation has been adequately addressed, and a suitable solution found. We see no need for further action. End Comment.

Latvia) Russia too slow with visas

18. (SBU) Latvia (Nilsons) made a statement expressing concerns that Russian delays in issuing visas for its team members prevented them from participating on its planned observation flights with Germany the week of March 31. (OSCC46/JOUR/142, Annex 4). Unfortunately, Germany proceeded with the mission without its Latvian partners, and their visas were only received on April 3, after the mission was underway.

19. (SBU) Russia apologized for the delay in issuing the visas, claiming an unfortunate technical hitch in the visa processing due to turnover of personnel in its consular section in Riga. He said the personnel were not aware that the list of Latvian reps had already been approved in Moscow. He offered that in future Latvia may want to issue diplomatic visas to its team members since under an agreement between Russia and the European Union, EU reps with diplomatic passports do not require visas.

Sensor Group) "best guess" on digital

110. (SBU) USDel (Silberberg) provided an update from the Chair of the Informal Working Group on Sensors (IWGS) (U.S. Scott Simmons) on preparation of a "best guess" version of the digital video sensor decision (OSCC.SEN/5/08). In

response to a request received from the German delegation for reaching a consensus decision prior to the summer recess, the Chair provided a new version of the video decision produced following the March IWGS meeting. The new version was distributed as OSCC.SEN/4/08, with a request for electronic coordination by the end of April with a goal of adoption at the May plenary.

¶11. (SBU) On the margins, in a trilateral meeting with Russia and Germany, Germany informed us it agrees with the "best guess" version. Kozlov expressed doubts that the decision could be adopted in May and declined to speculate how long review in Moscow could take. He sent the new text to Moscow for review, where it needs to be reviewed by eight agencies. Kozlov said it may be necessary to have further technical discussions and the text changes one of Russia's "principled" positions, e.g., on data collection increasing from 9 to 12 data points. Germany wisely noted that the art of compromise sometimes involves finding a new "principled" position. USDel pointed out that 12 represented a reduced number from what most states were looking for.

¶12. (SBU) Comment: USDel understands Germany and Russia have a bilateral arrangement to conduct sensor testing in the fall. The "best guess" version is intended to offer a viable way forward for consensus that will allow all states --including the U.S.-- to move forward on this subject. Request the IWGS Chair provide an update on the status of consultations on this version prior to the May 5 plenary. End comment.

500th Commemoration brainstorming

¶13. (SBU) During the plenary, the USDel introduced a food for thought paper on potential activities for OSCC commemoration of the 500th observation flight (OSCC.DEL/3/08). On April 15, we held an informal discussion with twenty delegations which generated broad support for a number of press-related activities in July in Vienna. Delegations support the concept of highlighting the Open Skies success story, especially as a good news story in light of other European security issues. Public diplomacy officers advised by AC offices in USDel will work with OSCE Secretariat Press and Public Information Services to further prepare materials for this occasion.

IWGRP) Russia keeps the group engaged

¶14. (SBU) Following the plenary, Russian Chair (Kozlov) of the Informal Working Group on Rules and Procedures (IWGRP) held a meeting to introduce three papers provided by Russia prior to the recess. The first paper is a Russian food-for-thought on how best to provide for alternate airfields for flights to and from the point of entry/exit (OSCC.RP/3/08). The food for thought is accompanied by two draft decisions (OSCC.RP/1/08 and OSCC.RP/2/08). As a starting point, the Chair began discussion on the draft decision for designation of alternate airfields (RP/2). Delegations which spoke provided preliminary reactions, and most are awaiting further guidance from capitals.

¶15. (SBU) Canada supports the initiative, and suggests that ideally designated alternate airfields have IFR capability with instrument landing system (ILS). Also information on non-Jeppeson alternative airfields needs to be provided in advance. France sees the proposals as helpful in terms of bolstering flight safety, but questioned the language in para 2 about providing data no later than 30 days before the changes take effect) why not sooner? Russia says the 30 day language is intended to reflect the average cycle for preparations prior to a mission. Finland's initial reaction is positive, but wants to know if you land at an alternate en route to the POE due to bad weather, can the mission proceed from the alternate? Russia said this was not feasible due to the distances between alternates and the POE) escort teams would not be able to begin the mission from an alternate.

¶16. (SBU) UK also has a positive first impression and will study the feasibility of identifying such airfields in the UK. Greece wants to ensure that designation of alternate airfields does not interfere with the decision-making authority of the pilot-in-command to choose an airfield during emergencies. The Czech Republic expressed similar concerns and had the most lengthy of all the remarks. It has doubts about all the procedures in the food for thought and believes most of this can be done within existing procedures.

Czechs recall that air traffic control and ICAO govern the safety of flight with respect to emergency landings. Smaller countries have a limited number of airfields that can service all the Open Skies aircraft. It would not want to have to undertake infrastructure and financial burdens to have an airfield for all aircraft. It is unsure whether the potential for emergency landings justify the potential work involved with the decisions.

¶17. (SBU) USDel said the papers were comprehensive in nature and well-prepared. It appears that some procedures are similar to those of certain bilateral efforts, and we are awaiting further comments from Washington. After the meeting, USDel asked Russia how these papers fit with the U.S.-Russian bilateral arrangement. Kozlov said the papers are meant to be complementary and would not supersede our bilateral understandings. He provided us with a preview copy of the Russian version of the exchange of letters per our August 2007 bilateral discussions (emailed to VCI/CCA on April 16). Upon approval from Moscow, he will provide this letter under a note verbale from the Russian delegation in Vienna. He expects that the U.S. will make a mirror copy and return a similar letter with a note verbal from the U.S.

delegation in Vienna.

¶18. (SBU) Comment: USDel believes that Russia has essentially tried to capture the procedures agreed to bilaterally with the U.S. on this subject. Having reviewed both the RP papers and the bilateral exchange, Mission believes the efforts indeed are complimentary. We welcome further review and guidance from Washington on finalizing the bilateral arrangement, as well as any specific comments on the two draft decisions prior to May 5. End Comment.

¶19. (U) AOB:

--Russia, Turkey, Italy, Germany, and Sweden provided information of observation flights that took place since the March OSCC meeting;

--Slovakia drew attention to a recent notification providing information on a change of airfield to Malachy effective as of May 8;

--Russia provided a notification with aeronautical information on Pushkin and Siversky airfields per OS/RB/08/1028/F26/O as of April 2. See OSCC.NOT/1/08 for details;

--the next OSCC plenary and IWGRP meetings will be on Monday, May 5.

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